

The Salt Lake Tribune

Article ID: 100E9BC437DCC4DC

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SLOC Gifts May Make Some Blush

Viagra among favors bestowed on dignitaries

Saturday, September 30, 2000

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As the white-hot Olympic spotlight shifts from Sydney to Salt Lake City, the U.S. Justice Department's case against two former Utah bid officials will be generating new, and in some cases excruciatingly embarrassing, details of the bid scandal that has shrouded the 2002 Winter Games.

It is a case federal prosecutors have framed not only around the lavish gifts, cash and scholarships given to International Olympic Committee members and their families by local bid officials, but also a pattern of more intimate favors extended to IOC members up until the scandal became public in late 1998.

Many of these favors, including free medical care and paid vacations, already have been exposed. But many have not -- including, The Salt Lake Tribune has learned, the 1995 purchase of a violin, in violation of IOC rules, and the brokering of Viagra prescriptions for two IOC members who were visiting Salt Lake City in June 1998 to study ski slopes and skating rinks.

It is these sorts of as-yet-unreported details of the scandal story -- tucked away in obscure letters, e-mails and reimbursement request forms -- that prompted Salt Lake Olympic Committee president Mitt Romney to offer an unusual warning days before the opening ceremony in Sydney.

Gird for further embarrassments, he said, as the federal bribery case against former top Salt Lake bid committee officials Tom Welch and Dave Johnson wends its way to trial in 2001. A faction of the IOC offered its own warning: Prepare to be sued.

The IOC vigorously complained in May when SLOC released a copy of the so-called "Geld" document, in which the Salt Lake bid committee had matched certain IOC members with the word geld, meaning money or gold, and hinted at a number of other possible inducements -- jobs, bow ties and medical treatment. Many of those gifts and privileges were explained in detail and recorded by SLOC officials. One such document, The Tribune has learned, is a handwritten memorandum from 1998 about a visit to Salt Lake just six months before the scandal erupted.

In late June of that year, 20 members of the IOC Coordination Commission came to Salt Lake to study the city's preparations for the Utah Games. "They're not here to play," Johnson told The Tribune days before the commission visit. "This is going to be a very structured three days."

According to the memorandum, SLOC employee Van Alford drove two visiting IOC members -- only one is named -- to a Salt Lake City urologist.

The named IOC member obtained a prescription for Viagra, then gave Alford \$1,000 to buy the medication, used to treat erectile dysfunction. Alford first attempted to purchase the Viagra from a pharmacy at LDS Hospital, but the hospital did not have enough on hand, according to the document.

Alford eventually filled the prescription at a Smith's Food & Drug pharmacy in the Avenues area of Salt Lake City. Today at Smith's, \$1,000 would buy about 100 tablets (10 doses of a 50 mg. tablet currently retails for \$98.39 at the store).

Independent of the SLOC document, The Tribune also has learned that **the second, unnamed IOC member driven by Alford to the urologist obtained a prescription for 10 to 20 tablets of Viagra.** Neither of the IOC members made an appointment to see the urologist prior to the Salt Lake visit, and a third party called a secretary at the doctor's office inquiring whether the two IOC members could be seen that day. They were.

Because the transaction was not illegal, has not been introduced as evidence in court and involved a private medical matter, The Tribune is not publishing the identity of the IOC official named in the memorandum.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration had approved the sale of Viagra in the United States only months before the IOC member's purchase. **The medication still was banned in many countries and at the time a single blue tablet sold on the black market overseas for as much as \$600.**

Foreign citizens can obtain valid prescriptions in the United States, says U.S. Customs spokesman Mike Fleming. "If it's not banned in the United States, they are not going to have any problem, unless they have more than their normal 30-day supply."

While not illegal, the transaction did violate ethical standards, said professor Sharon Kay Stoll, director of the Ethics Center at the University of Idaho. She argues SLOC had no business arranging for the purchase of a pharmaceutical such as Viagra.

"It's not like [they] had the flu, that [they were] really sick and needed help. It sounds like something [done] undercover. It doesn't look good. The thing about working for an organization like the [IOC or SLOC] is you have to worry about impropriety," said Stoll, author of the books, *Who Says It's Cheating* and *Sport Ethics: Applications for Fair Play*.

Moreover, Stoll believes it was a mistake for SLOC to put itself in a position to possess private medical information on a non-employee.

The Viagra purchase occurred a year after Welch resigned from SLOC in the wake of a domestic violence

charge. Johnson, however, remained a key member of Salt Lake City's Olympic machine.

Welch and Johnson, indicted in July on 15 counts of fraud, bribery and conspiracy, are two of five people Justice prosecutors have linked in an alleged scheme to funnel more than \$1 million to the IOC. Welch and Johnson maintain everything they did was sanctioned by bid committee trustees.

The Viagra memorandum, which The Tribune has learned is on file at SLOC, is one of hundreds compiled by the bid and organizing committees that contain potentially embarrassing facts about the IOC, facts prosecutors or defense attorneys could use at trial.

Alford referred all questions to committee officials in Salt Lake City. The IOC declined to respond to this story. SLOC spokeswoman Caroline Shaw said the committee will not comment on medical records.

Another document in SLOC's files is a May 17, 1995, reimbursement request for two credit card purchases submitted by SLOC employee Jason Gull. First, Gull wanted **repayment for a \$524.47 violin** the document says was given to Gen. Zein Gadir, an IOC member from Sudan. Gadir was expelled by the IOC four months after the scandal broke for having accepted more than \$20,000 in cash and scholarships from Salt Lake bid officials.

The cost of the violin exceeded the IOC policy for gifts in excess of \$150, but no mention of the purchase was included in SLOC's ethics panel report on the scandal. Gull's

request for reimbursement came a month before Salt Lake was awarded the Games in June 1995.

On the same reimbursement form, Gull sought repayment for a \$74.27 vibrator purchased for an IOC member who has not been implicated in the scandal. The one-page document does not indicate whether Gull, who no longer works for SLOC, was reimbursed.

As Welch and Johnson head to trial, more of these incidents will come to light, Romney said in Sydney. Some of the information should be publicized, at the very least to demonstrate how much SLOC has changed in the wake of the scandal, Shaw said on Thursday.

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